

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Wednesday, November 23, 2011

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. [Field memo](#) sent two days early this week
2. RIDE partners with Health to improve student [vaccination rates](#)
3. South County [community forum](#) scheduled for December 1

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE):

4. [Technology Capacity Survey](#) due December 16 – **Action Item**
5. Opportunities available to serve on 2012 NECAP [Test Development Committees](#)
6. RIDE posts FAQs on new [Certification Regulations](#)
7. [PARCC](#) posts recorded webinars on the Model Content Frameworks
8. More sessions scheduled for Module 3 for [Personnel Evaluating Teachers](#)
9. RIDE schedules next [educator-evaluation](#) call-in session for Thursday, December 1
10. RIDE seeks weekly status updates on [Teacher-Course-Student data collection](#)
11. Local contribution to [Teachers Retirement](#) expected to decrease

Action Item Calendar

Thursday (December 1): Districts verify all [personnel assignments](#)
Thursday (December 1): For TCS, Districts clarify model to determine [“contributing educators”](#)
December 9: [Textbook reimbursement](#) forms due
December 16: Technology Capacity Survey due (see below)
June 30, 2012: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

Note: Reminders in the Action Item Calendar contain hyperlinks that will open the field memo in which the action item originally appeared.

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Field memo sent two days early this week

Because of the holiday, I am sending the weekly Field Memo this week on Wednesday (November 23). I hope you enjoy a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with your family and with your friends.

2. RIDE partners with Health to improve student vaccination rates

You may have seen recent news reports about an incidence of whooping cough in the Gilbert Stuart Middle School, in Providence. The infected student apparently did not receive the required vaccination. This incident has led us and the Department of Health to become aware that a large number of students in Rhode Island schools have not received the required vaccinations. We are working in partnership with Health to develop a plan to improve the vaccination rate in all Rhode Island schools. The plan will bolster the accuracy and timeliness of our data on student vaccination rates and will provide a system of support to help schools meet the goal of having all students fully vaccinated upon enrollment, which state regulations require. Improving the vaccination rate among students will ensure that our schools continue to be safe and healthy places for teaching and learning, will improve attendance rates, and will protect the health and well-being of the Rhode Island community. We plan to meet with our partners at Health sometime in February to begin work on a plan to take effect at the start of the next school year. We will invite representatives from RISSA, RIASP, and Rhode Island School Nurse-Teachers to join us in this process.

Meanwhile, it is essential that all schools become fully aware of their student-vaccination records and that your school leaders work with their school nurse-teachers or school physician to ensure that all students have received the required vaccinations.

3. South County community forum scheduled for December 1

I would like to invite you and your entire community to a forum on Thursday, December 1, in Westerly. This forum is part of a series for the 2011-12 school year to engage stakeholder groups across the state in a discussion about our public schools. The South County community forum will be an opportunity for me to share what is happening in education statewide and to hear back from the community on how our schools are doing. I believe that all of us share the responsibility for providing a world-class education for our students, and I would love to open a discussion on how each of us can work together to transform our schools. Please extend this invitation to your administrators, school-committee members, teachers, parents, students, and the general community. We welcome everyone to this meeting!

The forum will begin at 6 p.m., Thursday, December 1, at Westerly Middle School, 10 Sandy Hill Rd.

I will be scheduling several other community forums for later in the school year. If you would be interested in hosting one of these forums in your district, please let me know.

If you have any questions the South County forum, please contact Kim Bright at Kimberly.Bright@ride.ri.gov or 222-8470.

From RIDE:

4. Technology Capacity Survey due December 16 – Action Item

Please see this notice from our Office of Finance:

We are very pleased to announce that RIDE's 2011 Annual Technology Capacity Survey is now available, at:

[Http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/intech/TechSurvey.aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/intech/TechSurvey.aspx).

There are two important documents posted: one that seeks information regarding the technology capacity across a school district and the other that seeks information regarding the technology capacity within every school building. It is very important that both surveys be completed and returned by December 16. We are requiring 100-percent participation from all districts and schools, as this information is absolutely critical to support our technology-funding requests to ensure we maximize our returns on our investments in Race to the Top initiatives.

5. Opportunities available to serve on 2012 NECAP Test Development Committees

Please see the following message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE is offering two opportunities for classroom teachers and other educators to participate in the development of the NECAP tests for grade 3-8 and 11 in reading, writing, and mathematics. The NECAP Test Development Committees, which consist of educators from all four NECAP states, are essential to the work of creating a valid and reliable assessment system. Many educators have participated in these committees and have learned a lot, not only from the process but also from other educators representing Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Please encourage educators to apply to represent Rhode Island students as a member of the Item Review Committee or the Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee. Applications can be found on the RIDE Web site at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/TestDevCmte.aspx>

Note: All submitted applications must be complete and must be signed by both the applicant and his or her building principal or administrator.

Here is some information about each committee:

Item Review Committee (meets February 6 – 8, 2012)

As part of preparing assessment items for field-testing, each year NECAP reading, writing, and mathematics items are reviewed for alignment with the appropriate grade-level expectations, targeted Depth of Knowledge level, student accessibility, and instructional relevance. This work is done by grade-level content area teams of educators in mathematics and reading/writing with teachers representing Rhode

Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont on each team. The Item Review Committees meet once per year.

To qualify, educators should meet the following criteria:

- have advanced knowledge and experience with the GLEs or GSEs;
- have experience teaching at the relevant grade cluster; and
- be willing and able to work intensively on a team for three consecutive days.

Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee (meets February 6-8, 2012)

As part of preparing assessment items for field-testing, each year NECAP reading passages and all test items are reviewed to ensure that they are free from language or content that may negatively impact the test performance of a specific group of students. This work is done by a team of 16 educators: 4 each from Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. These teachers represent a specific group (e.g., racial, ethnic or religious groups; rural or urban interests; individuals with disabilities; recent immigrants; English-language learners) or have direct experience working with students from these groups. The Bias & Sensitivity review occurs in two phases. The first phase is the review and rating of passages for the reading test. The second phase is the review and rating of test items for reading and mathematics.

To qualify, educators should meet the following criteria:

- have current and direct experience teaching or working with students;
- offer a unique perspective on one or more specific student groups;
- be willing and able to work intensively with a team of educators for two consecutive days; and
- have some experience with the GLEs or GSEs.

Applications and additional information can be found online, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/TestDevCmte.aspx>

If you have questions, please contact the following RIDE personnel:

Bias: Susan Pagliaro, at 222-2644 or Susan.Pagliaro@ride.ri.gov

Mathematics: Patricia Carnevale, at 222-8458 or Patricia.Carnevale@ride.ri.gov

Reading/Writing: Colleen O'Brien, at 222-8474, or Colleen.OBrien@ride.ri.gov, or Diane Girard, at 222-8479 or Diane.Girard@ride.ri.gov

This notification will be sent electronically to all principals and curriculum directors on **Monday** (November 28).

6. RIDE posts FAQs on new Certification Regulations

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE has developed a comprehensive set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to accompany the newly passed Certification Regulations. The FAQs are broken down by topic and include information on implementation of the new Certification Regulations, renewal of certifications, the tiered certification system, changes to middle-school certification, new and current preliminary certificates, adding new certificates, certification testing, and fees. The FAQs and additional guidance documents, including a glossary, fee chart, proposed certification tests, and a PowerPoint presentation detailing how the newly passed certification regulations will impact currently certified educators, can be accessed at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/CertificationRedesign/Default.aspx>.

RIDE will continue to develop and post additional guidance documents as they are available. Please direct any questions to Andre Audette (andre.audette@ride.ri.gov or 222-5103) in the Office of Educator Quality and Certification.

7. PARCC posts recorded webinars on the Model Content Frameworks

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

PARCC has posted two recorded webinars on the recently released Model Content Frameworks for Mathematics and for ELA/Literacy. Each webinar provides an overview of the Model Content Frameworks, addresses revisions based on the feedback to the draft frameworks, and outlines key points on using the frameworks for district and building administrators and teachers.

Each webinar lasts approximately 90 minutes. The webinars, PDFs of the PowerPoint presentations, and the Model Content Frameworks can be found at www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks and are linked on the RIDE Web site, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx.

8. More sessions scheduled for Module 3 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

To date, more than 350 educators have attended Module 3 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers. Evaluators who have yet to attend Module 3 have 10 additional opportunities through December 8. Evaluators can register by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

9. RIDE schedules next educator-evaluation call-in session for Thursday, December 1

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

In order to provide educators with additional opportunities to receive answers to their questions about educator evaluation, RIDE has scheduled a call-in session for Thursday, December 1, from 3 – 4 p.m. Interested participants will need to register for the call-in sessions to obtain the conference-call number. In order to register for the call and receive further directions, go to:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/248730870>.

10. RIDE seeks weekly status updates on Teacher-Course-Student data collection

Please see this notice from our Division of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies:

Last Tuesday (November 22), RIDE hosted a webinar to provide an overview of the data-enterprise system and to give an update on the teacher-course-student (TCS) data links to help everyone to better understand the scope and scale of the systems, as well as the roles and responsibilities of all involved. All superintendents, principals, technology directors, business managers, and data managers were invited to attend. RIDE has posted all documents presented during the webinar, along with a recording of the webinar, on our Web site, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/ONIS/webinar_20111122.aspx.

RIDE has developed the “TCS Milestones for LEAs” document, also accessible through the Web-site link above. In order to ensure that districts can successfully complete the TCS data collection within the timeframe provided, RIDE will be tracking the completion of six key milestones by each LEA. RIDE is asking the Data Manager for each district to submit a weekly status update, via the TCS Milestone Tracking module oneRide, which can be accessed at www.eride.ri.gov.

Beginning Friday, December 2, RIDE will gather and review all TCS milestone updates that LEAs have submitted on a weekly basis so that RIDE staff can assess the readiness of each district to meet the final deadline of having all TCS data submitted, cleaned, and validated by February 1, 2012. Weekly updates to RIDE via this tracking module by each district will help RIDE understand and respond to any specific risks or issues districts are experiencing in their TCS data-collection efforts. RIDE staff members are prepared to work with districts that have alerted us via the tracking module to potential issues that could affect their ability to complete TCS collection on time.

Each Tuesday, RIDE hosts a weekly webex with all district Data Managers. Between December 2, 2011, and February 1, 2012, RIDE will include a status update on TCS collection in order to inform all districts of issues, questions, or strategies that might be relevant to all districts in their TCS work.

During the webinar on November 22, RIDE announced that funding will be provided to districts and charter public schools for data-entry assistance for two to six weeks of work, depending on the size of the LEA. People in the field expressed that they would prefer to decide the manner in which RIDE could provide this support by using either a

temporary outside employee to do the direct data entry or by having a temporary employee relieve the internal staff person who will be responsible for the data entry, in an effort of making the process sustainable.

The allocations by LEA can be found on the RIDE Web site, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/ONIS/webinar_20111122.aspx.

The Race to the Top Instructional Improvement System Allocation has been increased. Please log into AcceleGrants and revise your budget to use these funds and to submit the revision for approval. RIDE will expedite these approvals to assure timely reimbursement of these expenses.

11. Local contribution to Teachers Retirement expected to decrease

Please see this notice from our Division of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies:

As a result of pension changes made by the General Assembly last week, the State Budget Office has issued a new rate for the required contribution for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 for Teachers Retirement. The new employer rate for FY 2013 is 19.29 percent, which RIDE estimates will result in a required contribution for most local education agencies of 11.41 percent. For Burrillville, East Greenwich, Little Compton, New Shoreham, and North Smithfield, RIDE estimates the required local contribution will be 11.03 percent. Keep in mind that these are planning values for budget preparation and that the official required contribution rate will be set by the State's actuaries. Below is a chart with additional information on required contribution rates for Teachers Retirement:

| | <u>FY 2011</u> | <u>FY 2012</u> | <u>FY 2013 pre-reform</u> | <u>FY 2013 post-reform</u> |
|-------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| State | 7.76% | 9.09% | 14.27% | 7.88% |
| Local | | | | |
| I | 11.25% | 13.23% | 20.98% | 11.41% |
| Total | 19.01% | 22.32% | 35.25% | 19.29% |

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>